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#### A PLEA FOR A SIMPLER LIFE.

'THROW physic to the dogs, I'll none of it,' exclaimed Macbeth in the teeth of the doctor called in to cure Lady Macbeth's unspeakable mental troubles. A well-known physician used to tell his patients that if they had not learned at forty what was best for their stomachs, he could not help them. This is quite of a piece with the sayings that a man is either a fool or a physician at forty, and that many people dig their own graves all too soon with their teeth. That philosopher upon things in general, Professor Blackie, uttered his plea late in life for simplicity all round. He considered there was too much of everything nowadays—far too much eating and drinking, preaching, writing, and speaking. 'My friend, you eat too much; my friend, you drink too much,' was a saying often on the lips of the late Sir Andrew Clark, who thought that the worst disease was the outcome of this constant and uninterrupted violation of health. Here is an old Edinburgh physician in wonderful agreement with all this, who has spent part of the evening of a busy life in telling the world that it eats and drinks far too much, that but little or no medicine is sometimes best, and that the true vocation of the physician is to help nature to help herself. The few simple rules which guided his own personal conduct, and his practice as a physician, were chiefly that in sickness neither medicine, nor alcoholic stimulant, nor food is necessary, as a general rule, but are often injurious. That the sick are best left to nature's remedies; rest to the stomach, rest and warmth to the whole system, by being sent to bed, with pure air and good water. To all who are curious as to this method of treatment we refer them to the *Plea for a Simpler Life*, by George Keith, M.D., F.R.C.P.E. (A. and C. Black). In this little book he has set down in detail what he considers many of the errors of both patients and doctors as to diet and general treatment. What he preaches he has practised on himself and

some of his patients, with the happiest results, although in the process he earned the nickname of the 'Starvation Doctor' from those who disagreed with him. But to all critics he quotes the motto of the Keiths, Earls Marischal of Scotland: 'They have said: what say they? let them say.'

The author is the son of the late Dr Keith of St Cyrus, Kincardineshire, author of a once popular work on prophecy and of other religious books. Of his seven sons, four were doctors, the only one surviving being the author of the *Plea*. His more famous brother, Dr Thomas Keith, with whom he was twenty years in partnership, had a European reputation as a successful operator in cases of ovariotomy. He settled in London in 1888, and died only last October. Full of talent, courage, and genius, he ranks as one of the greatest amongst those who have formed the Edinburgh Medical School. His brother, whose work we are now briefly to discuss, may be said to ride a hobby; but the world leans so much towards self-indulgence, there will be little difficulty in keeping the balance level in the case of the many or the few who adopt his advice and treatment.

There is a wonderful agreement between the sentiments of Dr Keith as to doctors and medicine and those of Samuel Smiles in his first book, *Physical Education*, which was favourably noticed in this *Journal* on its appearance in 1838. An article on 'Use and Abuse of Medicine,' by a physician, which appeared in this *Journal* also, on May 5, 1849, might have been written either by Dr Smiles, or the author of the volume under consideration. The future author of *Self-help* had just passed as a surgeon, was practising in his native Haddington, and his book is a wonderfully acute and sensible production for a youth just turned his twenty-second year. He girds at the absurdity of the regulations which made it the interest of the greater part of the medical men in England to fill their patients with drugs, whether they actually required them or not, in order to obtain

anything like a fair remuneration for their advice and attendance. It would prove more useful and profitable to the public, he tells us, 'that the most effectual way to insure health is to adopt the natural means to preserve it—such as by pure air, exercise, and healthy supply of food—instead of wantonly neglecting these means, and afterwards resorting to physic, that instead of alleviating, often infixes the mischief more deeply in the constitution.' He believes that such a discovery would render physicians, who were then comparatively useless in curing disease, of great importance to the public weal, as *Preservators* of the health of the community. This is pretty strong for a young medical man, and although the world has changed somewhat since this was written, yet the hawker in Manchester who the other day, feeling unwell, swallowed twenty pills on Saturday and eight on Sunday, and who was dead on Monday, certainly needed this advice. It was clear that Dr Smiles was much more in his element as railway secretary, or writing the lives of self-made men. He was but a voice crying in the wilderness, the echo of which has been more than taken up by Dr Keith.

We are all deeply interested in our own health, but it takes effort and self-denial to follow good advice. 'What is the use of good advice,' said Thackeray once, when asked if he had ever received the best medical advice, 'if you don't follow it. They tell me not to drink, and I do drink. They tell me not to smoke, and I do smoke. They tell me not to eat, and I do eat. In short, I do everything that I am desired *not* to do; and therefore, what am I to expect?' Whether he expected it or not, the great novelist had a sudden and comparatively early death. Thomas Carlyle had his stomach ruined, at least so he thought, in all his student lodgings; and when told to stop smoking, he said his medical adviser might as well have whispered this advice into the ear of the nearest jackass. Listen to Dr Keith, who has outlived all his contemporaries who chose a short life, and he is afraid not entirely a merry one. 'If when in good health we took only the food necessary for our comfort and for our work, and no more, instead of working the stomach to the utmost, and helping it when it flags by dainties, as well as by drugs and stimulants, we would have much more pleasure from our meals, and a much longer continuance of strength and health. We would also escape many of the ills that life is said to be heir to; or, should some disease perchance come upon us, if we could eliminate from the old system of cure a large amount of the depletion, and from the new a still larger amount of the feeding and physicking, we would come nearer to nature's mode of preventing and curing diseases; we would find that *prevention* would be far the larger element of the two, and that the need for the other would be well-nigh extinguished.' This comes very near Dr Smiles's Preservative of Health. Dr Keith might have added something upon the importance of good cookery, which is by no means so well understood, at least in the homes of the poor, as it ought to be. Good cookery, as we all know, is also a powerful Preservative of Health.

In reviewing the experience of a lifetime, Dr Keith recalls the time when bleeding, vomiting, purging, and sweating were the order of the day, which was followed by the reaction towards the 'setting up of the system,' the use of stimulating and tonic medicines, and plenty of good food and drink. His practice has been directed against what he considers the fallacies of this style of treatment. He tells us that his own father, an athletic man of over six feet in height, was mismanaged by the doctors—certainly his brother, Dr Thomas Keith, was so, when a student; and he himself suffered so horribly from doses of calomel given to him when a weakly child, that he vowed, if he should ever become a doctor, he would never give a child a dose of it. And he never did. Dr Keith, in a glimpse of personal experience, relates how he dropped taking aperients at thirty-five. Up to this time he confesses to grave errors in diet, and sufferings from occasional bilious attacks which lasted for two or three days, as well as frequent chills. When he had almost decided to leave the trying climate of Edinburgh for a warmer one, an old friend, a Hungarian physician settled in Manchester, asked him, before so deciding, to try what effect giving up butcher-meat would have upon him; to reduce his tea and coffee by one-half, and to take only a little light claret to dinner, if he found that suited him. This doctor considered red-meat diet too irritating for his friend's excitable nerves. He took this advice, and was able to continue work for fifteen years longer; and when he did retire, it was not his stomach which failed him. In his fifteen years of retirement he confesses to excellent health.

It is not our place to discuss here Dr Keith's statement that the present system of medical teaching and practice is wrong, and that it is still on the down-grade. He indicates what most people will admit, that medicine is by no means a fixed science, and that the means nowadays used to cure a large part of the diseases commonly met with, are often those which, when improperly used, are the main causes of these same diseases. It is the improper use of food, drugs, and stimulants he here condemns. It must not be understood that he condemns all drugs; he knows their value and when to use them, but he disputes the aphorism of Hippocrates, 'Better a doubtful remedy than none.' For full-fed people, he considers the best tonic is a little wholesome abstinence, and he mentions with approbation what he heard Professor Syme say, that after fish and soup he had dined. For long he has looked upon alcoholic stimulants as like a whip or spur to a horse; their effect is transient, and attended with a decided loss of power. Hot water, on the other hand, he considers one of the most genuine stimulants we have. In cases of disease, when the organs are not in a healthy condition, there is also a great loss of power in digesting food, and it is done in an imperfect manner. Food taken at this time is more hurtful than beneficial. Obey the dictates of nature rather, and abstain when nature has stopped the appetite. In the human body nature has provided a store of food already

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digested, which requires absorption, and which may often be relied upon to tide the patient over until appetite returns. Dyspepsia and other troubles, he points out, have been a perfect mine of wealth to the doctor and the chemist. Dr Tenneson of Paris, an authority on skin diseases, is in accord with him as to food: 'Many people, because they have a good appetite, think they have a good stomach, and manufacture daily in their overloaded digestive tracts toxic substances, which, after they are absorbed, excite abnormal effects, both on the skin and all the other organs of the body.' The recommendation is to restrict the quantity, particularly at the mid-day meal. He also recommends less food, or none at all, when one is worried. Dr Keith once asked Sir Erskine May how he kept his health during anxious work and long parliamentary hours. He replied that his practice was, while Parliament was sitting, to take a chop in the middle of the day and only a cup of tea at night. We fancy he is wrong, however, in crediting Thomas Alva Edison with consideration for his workmen's stomachs, when he shut them in until a certain piece of work was completed.

Those who are curious as to Dr Keith's treatment of influenza cases, cancer, dyspepsia, apoplexy, &c., may be safely referred to this volume, which, being the ripe experience of a lifetime, is calculated to make the reader pause and consider, and certainly can do no human being any harm, but may be the means of doing a very great deal of good.

#### THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN.\*

##### PROLOGUE (*continued*).

'NEPHEWS,' he said, laying the bag on the table and keeping both hands upon it, 'you come every night to the Red Lion in hopes of finding out something about my property. It is your inheritance—why shouldn't you come? Sometimes you think it is much—then your spirits rise. Sometimes you think it is little—then your spirits sink. When I begin to talk you prick up your ears. But you never hear anything. Then you go home and you wonder how long the old man will last—eh? and how much money he has got—eh? and what he will do with it—eh? Well, now, you shall have your curiosity satisfied.'

'Sir,' said one of the nephews, 'our spirits may well sink at the thought of your falling into poverty.'

'And,' said the other, 'they may be expected to rise at the thought of your prosperity.'

'I have told you many stories of travel and of profit. Sometimes you believe—in which case you show signs of satisfaction. Sometimes you look glum when you think that you are wasting your evenings.'

'Oh, sir,' said one of the nephews. 'Sure, one cannot waste one's time in such good and improving company as yourself.'

'We come,' said the other, 'for instruction. Your talk is more instructive than any book of travel.'

'The time has now arrived—the old man paid no attention to these fond assurances—to tell you what I have, and to show you what you will have. I am now grown old, so old that I must expect before many years are over—he was already, as you have seen, ninety-four—to die,' he sighed heavily; 'and to give my substance to those who come after. Look you! I bear no manner of affection to you; when a man gets to ninety he cares no longer about anything but himself. That is the beauty and excellence of being old. Then a man has everything for himself—no sharing, no giving. I shall give you nothing—not even if you are bankrupt. But I mean not to defraud my heirs. You shall see, therefore, all I have got. Many a rich merchant living in his great house would be glad to change places with you when I am gone. Many a merchant? All the merchants of London town!'

He took up the bag—it was a long narrow bag of brown canvas, about two feet long, and shaped like a purse of the period.

I know not what they expected, but at the sight of the treasure which he poured out upon the table, these two respectable boat-builders gasped: they looked on with amazement unspeakable, with open mouths, with staring eyes, with flaming cheeks, with quivering hands and trembling knees. They could not look at each other; they dared not speak. It was like the opening of the gates of Paradise, with a full view of the interior arrangements.

They had never dreamed of such a sight. Five hundred pounds all in gold would have seemed to these worthy tradesmen a treasure; five thousand pounds great wealth; ten thousand pounds an inexhaustible sum. For this old man poured out upon the table a pile, not of guineas, but of precious stones. Why then, his stories about the treasures of the Great Mogul must be true. There were diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls, all the stones which he described, hundreds of them, thousands of them; there were precious stones, large, splendid, worth immense sums, with smaller ones, with strings of pearls, enough to fill quart pots. And now they understood what was meant by all those stones over which they had gazed as incredulous as Didymus.

The old man bent over his heap and ran his fingers into it, and caught a handful and dropped it back again. 'See my beauties!' he cried. 'Look at the colours; the sunshine in them, and the green and the red. Saw you ever the like? Oh! if a man could but live long enough to work through this heap! Why, 'tis seventy years since I first came home, with this bag in my hand for all my fortune, and there's no difference in it yet. It grows no less: I sometimes think it grows bigger. No man, live as long as he could wish, would work through this heap.'

'May we humbly ask, sir,' said one of them,

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taking heart, 'how much money is represented by this bag of jewels?'

'I know not. Take this stone; it's a ruby. Look at it, weigh it; I sold one like it three months ago for fifty pounds. There are hundreds bigger. Well'—he began to put the stones back into the bag—'I have shown it to you because the time will come—not yet, I hope—it must come, I suppose'—he spoke as if there was still a chance of an exception being made in his favour—'when I must give the bag to you two and go away. I shall have to go aboard a strange ship and join a strange company, as bo's'n, maybe, or able seaman, or cook, who knows? and sail away in strange waters on a new cruise, where there are no charts.'

'Not for many years,' murmured one of the nephews.

'Not if our prayers, our daily prayers, can keep you here!' added the other.

'Thank ye,' said John Burnikel, tying up his bag.

'I trust, sir,' said one of the nephews, 'that you keep this precious treasure in a safe place. A whisper, a suspicion, would fly through Wapping like wild-fire, and you would be robbed and murdered.'

'Devil a whisper will there be,' said John. 'You won't start a whisper, that's certain. And I won't. And as for the place where I keep it, no one will see me put it there, and no one would think of looking there. And now, nephews, good-night. Say nothing—but, of course, you will not—and be as patient as you can. I believe you will have to wait a dozen years or so before you get the bag.'

They stepped out into the street and heard him, to their satisfaction, bolting and barring the door behind them.

'Cousin,' said one, 'this has been a wonderful evening. Who could have believed it? We are now rich men—oh!—rich beyond our dreams! We can leave Wapping, and court the society of the Great.'

'Unless his bag is stolen; which may happen. I tremble only to think of keeping such a treasure in such a mean little cottage among all these rogues and villains! It ought to be in a strong room such as merchants use.'

'I think—I fear—we shall not have to wait long. Methinks the old man's voice is breaking. He seemed feebler to-night than I remember to have seen him. Ninety-four is a great, a very great age.'

'Ah! He may not have many weeks—many days—to live. It is a happiness, cousin, to reflect that an uncle who entertains a disposition of so much justice towards his nephews must soon be resting in Abraham's bosom.'

This anxiety proved prophetic. Exactly a week afterwards John Burnikel did not appear at the tavern at six o'clock, nor at half-past six. The nephews hurried round to Broad Street. The door was open; there was no one in the front room: in the room behind they found their uncle lying on his bed, his face drawn as with pain, and with the gray look which often falls upon those who are about to die.

'Ah,' he said, 'I thought you wouldn't be long. Come in, boys. Shut the door and come in.'

I've had a kind of fit; my legs don't seem right. Get me a drink: the barrel of beer is in the other room. I shall be better to-morrow—much better.' He drank a copious draught of beer which refreshed him. He tried to sit up, but could not. It was a day in August when it gets dusk about eight. At nightfall they found the tinder-box and got a light, and sat down one on each side of the bed.

So they sat all night till three in the morning without saying a word to each other. The old man seemed sleeping. At daybreak he began to murmur, rambling in his speech.

'The man's mad. He won't know; he won't find out. He will die mad. No one will know—no one will know. Boys'—he opened his eyes—'you both know where the bag is hidden away. I think this is the end. Well, I've left you rich—half as rich, each of you, as myself.' He closed his eyes. Presently one of the watchers bent over him.

'Cousin,' he said, 'the breath has gone out of the body. Our uncle is no more. Nothing remains but to weep for our uncle.'

'Let us find the bag and divide the property,' said the other, 'before we call in the neighbours.'

'It is our sorrowful duty to do so, as his heirs, and quickly, before the thing gets wind.'

It was the custom to construct at the head of the great wooden bed of the period a secret box, drawer, or repository. Everybody knew the secret place at the head of the bed. It was an open secret, yet it was commonly used in every house for the concealment, as in a place of perfect safety, of the silver and the valuables.

They searched in this receptacle. The bag was not there.

'It is in this room, because he brought it out of this room. Let us look again.'

Again they searched every corner and cranny of the secret hiding-place. It was not there. There might be some other hiding-place in the bed. It could only be at the head. They tapped and hammered. In vain. Was it on the head of the bed? They climbed up and looked. No. It was not there. Could it be in the mattress? In the feather-bed? In the bolster? Under the bolster? Under the mattress? They lifted the dead man on to the floor, and they examined these places and other constituent portions of the bed. In vain. They lifted their great-uncle back again to the bed, and gazed at each other with anxious eyes.

'It must be in this room,' they reflected. 'He brought it from this room. He took it back.'

They looked round. There was a three-legged stool leaning against the wall because one of its legs was broken off. There was a sea-chest in the corner, a big heavy box with a lock, and bound strongly with iron. Ah! The sea-chest. They dragged it out, and threw open the lid. Within was a curious collection of miscellaneous property: a big silver watch, a knife, a dirk, an ugly Malay creese, an old pistol, a bo's'n's whistle, a mariner's compass, a bundle of charts, a few trifles in carved wood from India, two or three broken figures from India, a dead flying-fish, together with a bundle

of decayed or decaying clothes which filled up the bottom of the chest. They pulled everything out with eager haste, each man looking jealously at the other for fear he should secretly convey the bag into his own pockets. Everything lay on the floor, and the bag was not in the chest. It was divided into two compartments, a larger and a smaller. They held it up to the light. No, there was nothing in the chest. They looked again about the room. There was a cupboard in the wall. Both discovered it at the same moment and rushed at it. They threw open the door. It was a spacious cupboard. But there was nothing in it at all. Old John Burnikel had never used that cupboard.

'Let us lift the hearthstone,' said one of them. 'Everybody knows that the hearthstone was often the family bank where money was stowed away for safety when there was no secret hiding-place at the head of the bed. And the family continued to put faith in the hearthstone long after it was perfectly well known to those persons who break in and steal.'

They did lift the hearthstone. Nothing was under it. The earth had never been disturbed since the stone was laid.

Their faces were now haggard. Could the bag be stolen?

They then prised up the boards of the floor: they tore down the wainscoting: they searched the little backyard for signs of recent disturbance: they remembered that there were two rooms up-stairs; they were empty and unfurnished, but they tore up the boards: they searched in the roof: they searched the chimneys. Heavens! There was no sign of the bag anywhere. Where was it? Where was it? All that day they searched. The next day—which was indecent in haste—they buried the old man, neither of them attending the funeral for fear of the bag being found in their absence. And then they began again. They wrecked the house: they reduced it to its bare walls of brick: they pulled the bed to pieces: they left, as they thought, nothing unturned. But the bag was not in the house.

Then they began to think that while the old man lay unconscious, the door open, the bag might have been stolen. But it must have been hidden away, and nobody knew that it was there or had thought of it.

Then another suspicion entered the heads of both at the same moment. One of them, when it had taken shape with the firm outline of certainty, put it into words.

'His last words, George—his dying words—were: "You know where I've put the bag," and he looked at you—at you. What did he look at you for? Because you know where he put the bag.'

'He looked at you, Robert—not at me. Why? Because he had told you where it was. You wormed his secret out of him.'

'And now you try to turn it off on me. You've taken the bag: you've got it somewhere; you think to take it all for yourself.'

'This impudence passes everything. Do you think I am simple not to see through this vil-

lainy? 'Tis you—you—you—who have taken the bag.'

It is sad to relate that these recriminations became more and more bitter; that the two boat-builders of Wapping, churchwardens, jurymen, most respectable and responsible persons, partners and cousins, did in the agony of their disappointment call each other rogue, thief, villain; that they proceeded, being beyond and beside of themselves with bitterness, to shake their fists at each other; that they next—it was a fighting age—fell upon and mauled each other; that they only desisted when exhaustion, not satisfaction, compelled them to separate; and that they parted with threats, curses, and promises of Newgate Gaol and the Condemned Cell.

In a word, the bag could not be found; the agonies endured by those two disappointed men were terrible. To have these treasures just shown to them, dangled before them, and then withdrawn! Heard one ever the like? To conclude, they dissolved partnership. One of them left Wapping altogether, to enjoy, at a distance, the other said, his ill-gotten wealth; the other remained, to conceal, the first said, the fact of his stolen property. And as for the remaining goods of John Burnikel—the table, the bed, and the household gear—they were conveyed to the remaining boat-builder's house, and after one more final search the old man's cottage in Broad Street was abandoned.

But the cousins were wrong. Neither of them had the bag, and it remained undiscovered. You shall see how, in the course of this history, it came to be discovered.

### BATH BRICK.

THERE are few households in England where that homely commodity, Bath brick, is not a necessary inmate. But there are, we imagine, quite as few housekeepers who, even if familiar with its outward appearance in the storeroom, and more than vaguely aware of its indispensability, have ever bestowed a thought on either its origin or its manufacture.

The Bath brick is not, it must be confessed, *per se*, an interesting object, and, on examination, it is not easy to see how it could be made more prepossessing to the eye. This oblong, calcareous substance, of pallid hue and rasping touch, certainly bears no romantic aspect, and even if, penetrating as it does into all quarters of the globe, its handling may recall associations with its uses in a mother-country, it would be a fanciful imagination indeed that would connect it with waving trees, running water, or smiling landscape; would credit it with exile from a home of beauty; or assert that, like the poet, the Bath brick is born, not made.

Yet this, allowing for manipulating and shaping and for a final baptism of fire, is very literally the truth. So few of our readers are likely to have felt the most elementary interest in Bath bricks at all, that they are not very likely to have heard, or to remember when heard, that there is only one site in England, and—so far as the exact component parts are

concerned—only one in the world, which can be the centre of its industry. Because in only one river, and within only a certain distance from the town through which that river flows, can be 'gathered,' as it is technically called, the material of which the genuine Bath brick is formed.

That river is the Parrett, and the town Bridgwater, and those who, like the present writer, are familiar with the locality of the industry, and the simple, out-of-door methods of conducting it, would be obliged to admit that it is not without its romantic environment. The river Parrett, it is true, flows somewhat sluggishly through its narrow banks, and is, to all seeming, as turbid and mud-invaded as the 'inward eye' of the historian can picture it when its sullen waters bore the wicker canoes of the British settlers whose clusters of wattle and daub dwellings afforded them shelter on its marshy shores. Even though set in a surrounding of flat country where water meadows are intersected with dykes and bordered by pollard willows in true Dutch fashion, the town itself barely marks the horizon, and would seem to be originally planned only to be overlooked.

But Bridgwater is a busy centre of many industries, has a largely attended weekly market, and is the shopping town for many miles of a rich agricultural district. Moreover, in spite of its air of concerning itself only with the present, it can lay claim to historic interest in the past, and still cherishes traditions of its sieges, from the days of Alfred to those of Cromwell, and of its one memorable battle, when Monmouth was defeated on the plains of Sedgemoor. It is the birthplace of Admiral Blake, and but a few miles distant from the Quantock Hills beloved of Wordsworth and Coleridge during their sojourn at Alfoxton and Nether Stowey. But if we would see where the Bath brick has, literally, its home and haunt, we must resist all other claims on our attention and turn our steps to the river-side.

You need only follow the towing-path which leads on either side of the river, for a few hundred yards, and you cannot fail to be struck with the masses of mud, technically yclept 'slime,' which lie heaped against the embankment of the river, resembling to the untutored eye nothing so much as the gatherings of a scavenger's shovel on the side of a causeway.

The component parts of Bath brick form indeed, in spite of their watery habitat, the greatest possible contrast to the description of the commodity as a 'valuable aid to cleanliness.' Yet this gray adhesive mass is the only material used in the manufacture, and undergoes but little change, and no purification, before fulfilling its object.

The 'slime' itself is deposited by each tide as it comes up, but only within an area of about a mile and a half on either side of the centre of production. The forces of nature are its only agencies, the action of the salt water where it meets the fresh, giving the slime its peculiar and useful properties. Above and below its particular habitat, the deposit reverts to either mud pure and simple, or to a fine sand which, although it has no binding

properties, is largely used for moulding and building purposes.

The machinery for converting this curious product of nature into its saleable form, is, too, of the simplest description, and requires few hands, if the vast output to the civilised world is taken into consideration. The yards where it is made and stored are not many in number, and though varying in size and extent, do not give one the idea of being thronged with workers, while the whole process can be seen in a short space of time.

Let us come down to the yards, which are most of them abutting on the river's edge, to save time in transport. Here we can examine the first process of all, which is to collect the deposit as it gathers, in receptacles specially built for the purpose along the river's banks. These receptacles are called 'slime batches,' and consist of long pits from thirty to forty yards in extent, bricked and boarded, and so shaped as to present a perfectly squared off and even surface, with no angles or slope from which the outgoing tide would carry back in its course much of what it had so lately deposited. On these artificially raised batches the slime lodges just at the high-water level, at the turn of the tide, and the trench will fill up in about two months. In winter the accumulation is less, the freshets disturbing the water, and preventing the sediment settling.

Just above the river's bank, piled to a height of eight or nine feet, in mounds from forty to fifty feet long, the clay, taken from the batches, lies irregularly heaped. The digging out of this clay can be done in the winter months, and gives employment to a number of men when the actual brickmaking is at a standstill. As the spring days lengthen, and the yards can again be thrown open to their full complement of workers, it is the business of the 'temperer,' as he is called, to fill his barrow from these heaps, to supply the pug-mills, which we shall presently see in action. The temperer requires a supply of water for the sufficient moistening of the clay, a mattock for loosening it, and a shovel for digging it out. We cannot do better than follow him as he wheels his load to the mill, and see the whole process through. As you near his destination the air is already thick with motes of dust, and a general atmosphere of gritty particles invades the eyes, nose, and mouth at one and the same moment. Even before you reach the drying sheds, wherein are housed some thousands of bricks, piled symmetrically and according to an undeviating plan for excluding rain while freely admitting air, you are sensible of a general flavour—a bland, as the wine-merchants would say—of brick dust, fresh mortar, and the shakings of house-flannel in rather asphyxiating conjunction.

You can look in at the huge kilns whose fires burn red and sullen behind their gratings, and turning a corner, find yourself in the very centre of the industry. In a small cleared space is the pug-mill, a machine of such simple construction as to vary little from the familiar lines of the domestic coffee-mill. A horse, mercifully hooded and blinded, is harnessed to the single shaft, and paces, hour after hour, his dreary round, seeming hardly more conscious

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of the number of his revolutions round the beaten track, than the mill itself of its progress round its own axis. Two or three barefooted lads are actively engaged in bringing shovels full of clay to the side of the mill, into which they press it, to be forced out after a few revolutions in kneaded masses of a dough-like consistency. These, as fast as they emerge, are roughly formed into large balls by the 'off strikers,' whose duty it is to keep the 'moulder' or brickmaker supplied with material, and who lose no time in loading the trollys in which they bear the clay to the sheds close at hand which house the moulders.

These sheds are merely small huts constructed of bricks and boards, as shelter from sun and rain for the workman who stands within at a table on which he shapes the bricks, and who looks up incuriously at your entrance, without a moment's cessation in his rapid manipulations. His appliances also are few in number. On one side of him stands a box of powdered slime, and a pan of water is within his reach, as not only must the boards be dusted freely to prevent the clay from adhering, but the various instruments in use require moistening from time to time, to make them run more freely over it. His motions are so rapid, that it is almost impossible to follow the several processes by which he catches up the clay, slaps it into a four-sided frame, smooths it off at the top with a thin piece of wood called a striker, turns it down on the stamp which impresses the name of the firm, and, by means of a second and larger board, slips the newly made brick to join a lengthening row at his side. Until your eye gets accustomed to the rotation of his movements, the pile beside him, for which the 'bearer off' has just arrived with his barrow, seems replenished by a sleight-of-hand trick, and you are no longer surprised to hear that a good workman can turn out 400 bricks in an hour, and about 20,000 in a week.

There are but two more processes to be gone through now; the first being the stacking of the bricks in long rows or hacks, about five or six bricks high, under a slanting cover of tiles, to be dried by the sun and the wind, unless it is late in the season, and the bricks require more effectual protection, and must be placed in the drying-houses before mentioned, where they can be left for months if needful, before being taken to the kilns to be burned. And it is this process, the final and completing one, which appears to be the most important of all; for great care has to be taken in the burning, and only an experienced 'kiln setter' can tell the precise height and duration of temperature required. The action of the fire must thoroughly reach all sides of the bricks, so that the setting of a kiln is an art in itself. Moreover, all bricks spoiled in the burning must be regarded as bricks spoiled altogether, for they cannot, as before the process, be thrown back on the slime heaps to be re-made. As a kiln holds from 120,000 to 150,000 bricks, this final operation is naturally attended with some anxiety, until the four days required for its completion have expired, and the kiln need only be left to cool on its contents. These are then carried to the storing-houses, where they

are given into the charge of women, who rub each brick over on a stone before stacking them ready for use.

Very little is known of how or when the properties of the slime were discovered, or even as to the origin of the name, Bath brick. It is said that the bricks came before the public at a date contemporaneous with Bath buns, whenever that may be, and were named after them with the design of equaling them in popularity. Another conjecture is that the bricks resemble, when baked, the Bath stone of the district; while the veterans of the yards, if pressed for information on the subject, assert that Bath was the surname of the discoverer of the uses to which the product of the Bridgwater tides could be put.

This last hypothesis, though wanting corroboration, appears perhaps to have the most reason on its side, and it would seem only just that the honour of the name should rest with an initiator so gifted with close and skilful observation as he who could differentiate the deposit of the Parrett from that of any other river.

## AFTER THE FACT.\*

### CHAPTER II.

THE third constable nearly shot me through the head at sight. The twinkle of his pistol caught my eye; I threw up my arms and declared myself a friend—not, as I believe, one second too soon. Never have I seen a man more pitifully excited than this brave fellow on the back lawn. Brave he was beyond all question; but cool he was not, and I have reason to believe the conjunction is rarer in real life than elsewhere. The man on the lawn stood over six feet in his boots, and every inch of him was shaking like a jelly. Yet if our quarry had chosen that moment to make a dash for it on this side, I should have been sorry for him; my constable was suffering from nothing more discreditable than over-eagerness for the fray.

Would that I could say as much myself. Already I entirely regretted my absurd proceeding, and longed with all my heart to escape. But it was out of the question. I had put my hand most officiously to the plough, but there it must stay; and as it was too late to reconsider my position, so there was now no sense in investigating the hare-brained impulse upon which I had acted. Yet I turned it over in my mind there, with my naked feet in the cold dew, and could only suppose I had been actuated by an innate desire of mine to 'see fun' wherever fun was to be seen. One thing is certain, if I reckoned at all, it was without the bank-robber, for my old schoolfellow had put him quite out of my head. . . . And here they had 'him' in that house! We saw their lanterns moving from room to room on the ground-floor; and I should be sorry to say

which of us shivered most (from what different causes), the third constable or myself.

How long we waited I cannot tell; but in a little the lanterns ceased to flit behind the panes. The men had evidently gone up-stairs, and in the darkness we heard a sound as terrifying to me as it was evidently welcome to my companion. 'At last!' said he, and crept up to the back door, open-armed. We had heard the stealthy drawing of bolts; but we were destined, one of us to disappointment, the other to inexpressible relief. The door opened, and it was the sergeant upon whom his subordinate would have pounced. He stood there, beckoning without a word; and so led us to a locked room next the kitchen. His mate had gone round the front way to watch the window; we were to burst in the door and carry the room by storm; and in it, declared the sergeant, we should find our man.

We did not; and again I breathed. The room was not only empty; the window was fastened on the inside; and an accumulation of the loose fittings of the house, evidently for sale to the incoming tenant, seemed to explain the locked door. At least I said so, and the explanation was received better than it deserved. We now proceeded, all four of us (abandoning system in our unsuccess), to search the cellar; but our man was not there, and I began to tell myself he was not in the house at all. Thus, as my companions lost their heads and rushed to the attics as one man, I found mine and elected to remain below. The room we had broken into was the one I chose to wait in; for I had explored no other, and wherever else he might be, the robber was not here. Judge then of my feelings when I heard him moving under my feet. Horror glued me where I stood, unable to call out, unable to move; my eyes fast as my feet to the floor, watching a board that moved in the dim light of a candle-end found and lit by one of the constables at our first inspection. The board moved upward; a grimy face appeared through the aperture; it was that of my old school-fellow, Deedes major.

'For God's sake, Beetle, help me out of this!' he whispered.

'Deedes!' I could only murmur; and again, 'Deedes!'

'Yes, yes,' said he impatiently. 'Think of the old school—and tell me where they are! Are they gone?'

'Only up-stairs. What on earth's at the bottom of this, Deedes?' I asked him sternly.

'A mistake—a beastly mistake,' said he. 'They gave chase to me shortly after I left you. I got in here, but the one chap daren't follow me alone, and I ripped up this floor and got under while he was whistling away outside. I spotted a loose board by treading on it, and that bit of luck's just saved my bacon.'

'Has it? I'm not so sure,' said I, walking to the door and listening. 'What do they want you for?'

'Would you believe it? For sticking up the bank—when I was out at my lunch! Did you ever hear such rot?'

'I don't know; if you're an innocent man,

why not behave like one? Why hide—they're coming down! I broke off, hearing them. 'Stop where you are! You can never get out in time!'

His face in the candle-light gleamed very pale between the blotches of dust and dirt; but I fancied it brightened at my involuntary solicitude.

'You will help me?' he whispered eagerly. 'For the sake of the good old school,' he wheedled, playing still upon the soft spot I had discovered to him earlier in the night. It was a soft spot still. I remembered him in the eleven; then overcame the memory, and saw him for what he was now.

'Hush!' said I from the door. 'I want to listen.'

'Where are they now?'

'Looking on the next landing.'

'Then now's my time!'

'Not it,' said I, putting my back against the door.

He rose waist-high through the floor, his dark eyes blazing, his right hand thrust within his coat; and I knew what was in the hand I could not see.

'Shoot away!' I jeered. 'You haven't done murder yet. You daren't do it now!'

'I dare do anything,' he growled. 'But you—you'll never go and give a chap away, Beetle?'

'You'll give yourself away if you don't get under that this instant. They're coming down. Stop where you are, and I'll see you again; try to get out of it, and I promise you you're a gone coon!'

He disappeared without a word, and I ran out to salute my comrades in the hall.

'Well,' cried I, 'what luck?'

'None at all,' replied the sergeant angrily. 'I could have sworn it was this house, but I suppose we must try the next. How we've missed him is more than I can fathom!'

A slaty sky denoted imminent dawn as we emerged from the house; the chill of dawn was in the air, and there was I in nothing but pyjamas. One of the constables remarked upon my condition, and the sergeant (good man) made me a pathetic speech of thanks, and recommended me to my clothes. If they needed further assistance they could get it next door, but he was afraid his man had made a longer flight than that. And indeed when I returned to the spot, in my clothes, an hour later, there was no sign of the police in the road; and I was enabled to slip into the empty house unobserved.

I got in through an open window, broken near the hasp, by which the fugitive himself had first effected an entry. In the early morning light the place looked different and very dirty; and as I entered the room with the burst door, I thought it also very still. I tore up the loose boards, and uttered an exclamation which resounded horribly in the desolation. Deedes was gone. I poked my head below the level of the floor, but there was no sign of him underneath. As I raised it again, however, there was a soft step on the threshold, and he stood there in his socks, smiling, with a revolver in his hand.

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For one instant I doubted his intention ; the next, the weapon dropped into his pocket, and his smile broadened as though he had read my fear.

'No, no, Beetle,' said he ; 'it's not for you. I couldn't be sure it *was* you, that was all. So you're as good as your word ! I hardly expected you so soon—if at all !'

'Do you remember my word ?' said I meaningly, for his coolness irritated me beyond measure. His very face and hands he had contrived to cleanse at some of the taps. He might have been in bed all night and neglected nothing but his chin and his hair. And this was the man of whom a whole colony would talk this morning, for whom a whole colony would hunt all day.

'Your word ?' he said. 'You promised to help me.'

'On terms.'

'Half-profits ?' said he. 'Well, I'm agreeable to that. Then you haven't forgotten our conversation last night ?'

'At least I'm glad,' I replied, 'to see you make no more bones about your guilt. Where's the money ? I want it all.'

'You're greedy, Beetle !'

'Confound you !' I cried. 'Do you think I want to compromise myself by being found here with you ? For two pins I'll leave you to get out of this as best you can. You know me. I want that twenty thousand pounds. I want it to pay back into the bank. Then I'll do what I can, but not until.'

I saw his dark eyes blazing as they had blazed in the candle-light. He was between me and the door, and I knew that for any gain to him I never should have left that room alive. At least I believed so then ; I believe so now ; but at that moment his manner changed, he gave in to me, and yet maintained a coolness and a courage in his peril which more than fascinated me. They made me his slave. I could have screened him all day for the pure aesthetic joy of contemplating those fearless, dare-devil eyes, and hearing that cynical voice of unaffected ease. But the money I insisted on having.

'That's all very well,' said he ; 'but I haven't got it here. I planted it.'

'Tell me where.'

'I can't ; I could never make it plain ; it's not an obvious place at all. Still I accept your terms. Bring me a change of clothes to-night—I daren't face daylight—and I give you my word you shall have the stuff to take back to the bank. I've made a bungle of it ; thought of it for weeks, and bungled it after all ! It was that Barwon business tempted me. I wasn't ready, but couldn't resist the big haul. All I want now is to get out of it with a whole skin. And by Jove ! I see the way ! You go to old I'Anson with the money, and get him to say he'll see me. Then I'll tell him it was all a practical joke—done for a bet—anything you like—and if the thing don't altogether blow over, well, I'll get off lighter than I deserve. The old chap will stand by me at all events ; he's got his reasons.'

I refrained from asking what they were. I fancied I knew, and hoped I did not. But

Deedes demanded more than a silent consent to his plans.

'Look here : are you on, Beetle, or are you not ?'

'Can I trust you ?'

'I give you my word upon it ; till yesterday it was the word of an honest man.'

'You want a rig-out as different as possible from what you have on ?'

'Yes, and some whiskers or something, if you can possibly get hold of any. Your friends are great on theatricals. Ask to look at their props !'

'You'll pay back every penny, and plead a practical joke ?'

'Yes, I promise it. Man, it's to my own interest, I see no other way out of it, Beetle. I'm fairly cornered ; only help me to pay back before I'm caught, and at least I'll get off light.'

'Very well,' said I. 'On those conditions I will help you. Where were you when I came in ?'

'In the cellar ; it's safer and also more comfortable than under the floor.'

'Then I advise you to go back there, for I'm off. If I'm found here we shall be run in together !'

He detained me, however, a moment more. It was to put a letter in my hands, a stout missive addressed in pencil to myself.

'You see I've been busy while you were gone,' he said, in a tone quite shy for him. 'Read that after your breakfast. It may make you think less ill of me. And, for the love of Heaven, deliver the enclosures !'

I undertook to do so ; my interest, however, was as yet confined to the outer envelope, a clean piece of stationery, never used before.

'Upon my word,' said I, 'you have come prepared ! No doubt you have provisions too ?'

He produced a packet and a flask. 'Sandwiches and whisky,' said he, 'in case of need !'

I looked hard at him ; it may have been my imagination, but for once I thought he changed colour.

'Deedes,' said I, 'you're a cold-blooded, calculating villain ; but I must say I can't help admiring you !'

'And trusting me about to-night ?' he added, with some little anxiety.

'I wouldn't trust you a bit,' I replied, 'if it weren't to your own interest to do everything you've said you'll do. Luckily, it is. There's a hue and cry for you in this town. Every hole and corner will be watched *but* the bank. You can't hope to get away ; and by far your wisest plan is the one you've hit upon, to return the money and throw yourself on your manager's mercy.'

'It is,' he answered, with his foot upon the cellar stairs ; 'and you bet old I'Anson won't make it harder than necessary for me. It's a clever idea. I should never have thought of it but for you. Old man, I'm grateful ; it's more than I deserve !'

And I left him with my hand aching from a grip as warm as that of any honest man ; and what was stranger yet, the incredible impression of a catch in my villain's voice. Here, however, I felt I must be mistaken, but my

thoughts were speedily distracted from the anomaly. I had a milkman to dodge as I made my escape from the garden of the empty house. And half-way down the road I met none other than the poor discomfited sergeant of the night.

'Been having another look at the house,' said I, with the frankness that disarms suspicion.

'See anything fresh?'

'Nothing.'

'You wouldn't. I don't believe the beggar was in the house two minutes. Still I thought I'd like to have a squint myself by daylight; and there'll be little damages to repair where we come in. So long, mister; you done your best; it wasn't your fault.'

He was gone. I looked after him with my heart in my mouth. I watched him to the gate. Would he come forth alone—or ever? I saw the last of the sergeant; and then—I fled.

#### ON COMING TO LONDON.

By NICOL WATSON.

PERHAPS there are not in the language another four words of such significance as these: He came to London. No matter of whom said, poet or peasant, merchant or mechanic, they record, a step always momentous and not seldom fatal. To recall it brings back the dreams of youth, and the glamour of setting out in life. Wherever the human barque may at last have cast anchor in that wondrous ocean of London, and whatever may have been the adventures of the voyage, matters not. At the call of memory, back again comes the young elation of that day when, with all our bunting aloft, we shot forth in quest of fortune or fame on its waters.

The story-book of our childhood records that when Dick Whittington found himself homeless on his first night in London, he sat down in the streets and cried. Never believe it: the thing is not credible. What he did do was to walk on through her mysterious highways, where every house seemed a palace, and every shop a cave of wealth, building up hopes for the morrow. Boys like Dick do not cry in such circumstances.

It is said also that he was hungry. He may have been without food for a time, but assuredly he was not conscious of it; there were other things than bread to feed upon just then. We are told further that it was the bells of Bow Church that rang out 'Turn again'; but neither is that to be believed. The refrain he heard was the melodious chime of his own brave young heart, to which Bow Bells but lent an opportune accompaniment and confirmation.

A man who had travelled much, seeing many lands and varied peoples, confessed that he had never felt the delight of satisfied curiosity in such fullness as on the day when he first walked into London, a mere youth, and stood amidst the crowd and shops of Regent Street. A born wanderer by nature, and possessed of the means to gratify his desires, his fancy had fixed on Cashmere, out of many places full of wonder and romance, as a land where he should find truest enjoyment. To foster this idea he

avoided all books that affected to treat of Cashmere, and refused to believe that anybody had ever been there. In his imagination he saw it as a region of flowery valleys, soft-watered meads, peaceful vistas, and perpetual sunshine. He duly reached Cashmere, and he has long since returned, a thing he once thought might never happen. Of Cashmere he speaks reasonably and with calm appreciation; but ask him to tell again of how he first came to London, and in answering, his voice takes a tone of enthusiasm and mystery. He refuses to sully the recollection by analysis, or dim it by any later disenchantment. He was young then, and it was London.

Shakespeare 'came to London' entered, in fact, into eternal fame through its gates. Why he came, or precisely when, is largely a matter of conjecture. Over this, as over so much of his life, lies a veil that he himself never chose to lift. That he was poor is certain, and highly probable that he was quite unfriended. Whether he had any consciousness or persuasion of his almost miraculous gifts we can only guess. The impulse that led him there cannot have been altogether due to chance or whim; but that he could have foreseen the splendid result is altogether impossible. Like many a less-gifted mortal, he sustained the struggle of hope and fear. The first folio of his plays sells to-day for a large sum of money; but let us imagine a romance, worth twenty islands of treasure. Suppose some one, wrenching away a shaky panel in an old house in Warwickshire, came upon a concealed cupboard, wherein lay, thick with the dust of three hundred years, a roll of manuscript, curled and yellow with age. And suppose that, on unfolding it, he found it bore the title 'The Life of me, William Shakespeare.' Here surely would be a record of unparalleled interest, and chiefly the chapter which should tell of how he came to London. Think of what that step was to him, consider the power of his mind, imagine it at the age of fifty, looking back with calm unruffled insight on its own history as a drama, and then reflect what he, Shakespeare, could say about that youthful entry into London, and how depict it. A king's ransom could not buy the chapter, and a temple would be a poor place to house it.

A notable arrival in London was Doctor Johnson. He brought with him a sturdy, well-ordered mind, and no unrealisable dreams. No fever of living or romance of achievement was allowed to embitter him in his first struggles. He set himself resolutely for a long fight. The particulars of these early days are lost to us. Boswell tells us little, and what the Doctor did not confide to him he probably did not mean to be known. It is not difficult to imagine, however, in their most salient features, his first years in London. In a fine passage Boswell tells us that Johnson's sense of superiority over his fellows was not assumed from vanity, but was the result of the natural and constant effort of those extraordinary powers of mind of which he could not but be conscious by comparison. Johnson, says his immortal biographer, did not strut or stand on tiptoe; he only did not stoop. Erect and clear-minded, he lodged at a stay-

maker's, and dined at a tavern off a cut from the joint and bread, which, including a regular penny for the waiter, cost him eightpence per day. His pride was not of the fretful sort that spends itself in laments over the neglect of genius; it was an honest working pride. He knew it was only from the few he had to look for acknowledgment, and there was but one way to gain it—labour and worthiness. Boswell, using the common simile, speaks of him launching on the ocean of London; and if London is an ocean, the men are ships, amongst which towered Johnson's richly freighted galleon, at whose mast-head flew a lord-high-admiral's flag of rectitude and religion. She held on an even course, turning aside for no enchanted isles or bays of luxurious rest. Johnson's coming to London was amply justified. He never again forsook her; he loved her streets, was jealous of her honour, evidenced in his behaviour her dignity and might, dying at last in her embrace, a true Londoner, and a great citizen, to whom fields were fields, and men—souls.

A different and a sadder type of those who come to London was Chatterton, the young poet, who, at the age of barely eighteen years, in bitter disappointment and defeat took his own life, and was buried in a nameless grave. Stripped of all questions of literary morality, his short career is perhaps the most woful in London's history. He entered her gates with but a few pounds in money, but with such a plenitude of wealth in his teeming brain as no other poet ever brought. His rapidity and skill in production were alike marvellous, and he could write with equal force on opposite sides of a question, boasting of the fact. At first it seemed as if he was to succeed. In return for political articles Lord Mayor Beckford extended to him some countenance, although as yet no payment; but in a week or two the death of Beckford extinguished his hopes in that direction. Chatterton's letters to his mother at this time were full of a boastful confidence. Never fear, was their proud purport; I have the ability, and must in the end prevail. His prolific brain turned out essays, operas, songs, anything and everything, but for such a miserable return of cash that he was forced to live on bread alone, which he bought stale that it might last the longer. This is the tragedy: on the one side a proud, self-conscious youth of miraculous gifts; on the other, vast, frowning, unresponsive London,—London, with its avenues of wealth, its pinnacles of fame, its crowns of achievement. It was these that drew him away from Bristol and the mother for whom he retained so pure an affection. Here in London they seemed more distant, more difficult of attainment than when he but dreamed of them afar off at home. The fame that glittered so bravely at a distance was lost to the sight of him who stood at its base. And so in that little dark attic-room near by the turmoil of Holborn, weak from want, but stern in his pride, confessing defeat to no one but himself, the youthful poet swallows the little dose of arsenic, and passes away into silence. He came to London, and the sole gift he earned was a pauper's coffin. The great city neither heeded nor knew, and through her

gates next day passed the due quota of new adventurers for fortune or fame.

With much hesitation and reluctance Carlyle came to London. His motive and reasons may be found set forth with ample fullness in his Letters and Reminiscences. Over all these lies the persistent determination not to be of London; to be in it, but not part of it. The effect is picturesque and full of fine moral contrasts, but London was greater than he. True, she wanted him, but he must come to her, not she to him. The prophetic strains sent forth from the seclusion of Craigenputtock fell faintly on a small audience; issuing from London they struck the ear of the universe. Nowhere have the sentiments of the comer to London been set forth with such accuracy and insight as in many passages scattered over Carlyle's letters. In seeking merely to describe the house near the New River in Upper Clerkenwell, where he visited Irving, he depicts the very atmosphere and character of the neighbourhood. An hour in Kensington Gardens gives rise to a subtle picture of the place. He saw London with the poet's eye, looking beneath the obvious, and realising the wondrous life and movement for ever in action. He called London a modern Babylon, a turgid stream of ignoble life, and many other hard names. That was the protest of a proud mind, which held itself aloof. But still she drew him. He came, remained, and was of her. With lavish liberality she has laid Chelsea at his feet as an offering to his memory for all time. Ecclefechan possesses his mortal remains, but these she does not grudge, who holds the record of fifty years of his immortal activity.

Notwithstanding the daily post, and ever-increasing facilities of communication, the human stream still sets towards London. Her gates are thronged as before by new-comers with the same old hopes. Wherever there is an ambition, thither it tends, for sometimes London rewards with a regal hand. She is a world in herself. She holds forth temptations and teaches temperance; she confers fame and imposes humility; bestows wealth and enjoins charity. She has Ariel-like messages for such as can wield spells; monitions that the hills cannot give; lessons that the purling brook is innocent of; and one stone of her pavements can tell more than all the pebbles in the forest of Arden or elsewhere.

### T H E H E R M I T.

By C. J. CUTCLIFFE HYNE.

I.

WHEN ladies go alligator-hunting, they should clearly understand that people whom they find, and associate with most freely, in an Alabaman bayou, should not always be bowed to in Piccadilly. This sounds simple; an axiom, in fact; but because Miss Wilcox did such an uncalled for bowing, things happened which put two most respectable families in a condition of open fury, and I earned dislike as the Origin of Evil. As a matter of accuracy my yacht-mate was far more guilty than I. He had gone a-fishing one day in his shirt, and had spent

eight hours sandwiched in between wind and water, and had naturally returned with his legs bitten red raw by the sun. He developed a temper in consequence, that would have made him shunned in the Pit, and I was driven into a deed of temporary separation.

But first, as I am standing here on my defence, let it be clearly understood that I found Atcheson before I knew Miss Wilcox was yachting with the Van Sciaks in Mobile Bay, before, in fact, I knew that the lady was in America at all. I had seen her last in a West Kensington drawing-room, and (if the complete truth be told) had slipped her from my thoughts with a perfunctory hand-shake. One meets so many people.

Moreover, Atcheson was introduced by the *Parcae*. Being ignorant of the man's existence, I naturally did not seek for him specially. He lived two days deep in swampy country which is not yet charted in the United States maps.

Our yacht was then in the Bayou of Bon Secours (which opens off Mobile Bay), and the Man with the Sunburnt Legs said with many adjectives, that movement for him was out of the question. He remarked that he would stay on the sloop and fish for gaff tops'l's (as they call the cat-fish), and cavallos, and sheep-heads, and sharks, and whatever else he could get; and said that polite conversation was a strain to him. He stated that our crew (of one negro) would make a suitable butt for his future remarks, and put forward the suggestion that I should take myself off. 'Go and hunt alligators up the lagoons, and live like a savage in the swamps, and eat crackers and trout, and catch fever if there's any throwing about,' said the Man with the Sunburnt Legs; 'that'll be about your form.' So I pitied the nigger and went off—in pale pink pyjamas, and the ten-foot yawl-boat.

The sail to the head of the bayou was simple. Then there were two miles to be punted to the long narrow sliver of lagoon which lies inside the sand-dunes of the Mexican Gulf. The cypresses, and the black pines, and the magnolias arched above the cut, and fronds of palmetto which grew on clumps of soil, slashed at one like knives. The atmosphere was a hot moist stew, and there was a smell about it half-way between rotten eggs and the Harrogate pump-room. Also there were flies in all abundance, which fancied themselves masterless dogs, and bit accordingly.

The subsequent sail down the lagoon, under a brazen torrent of sunshine, came as one of the seven pleasures of life. There was a great wall of trees on the landward side, rearing itself from the water's lip in a hedge of undergrowth. To southward, from over the rambling line of dunes, with their fringes of scrub-grass and palmetto, came the dim bellow of the surf as it creamed and crumbled on the white Gulf sand. And down the silver ripples of the lagoon there blew an air, faintly salt, which chilled the wet cotton against one's spine, and pushed the yawl-boat on with the twinkle of fountains under her stem.

The lagoon bayed to an end, and there opened out another channel to be punted through, a narrow winding canal of twirls and branches

through quaking marsh land, a waterway rustling with fish, and ablaze with yellow lilies. Cardinal birds peered at one from the bushes, and purple herons thrust out curious beaks from the grass-clumps. It was all very peaceable, and extremely hot.

Then there came a lake with islands, a lake of water called by courtesy fresh, which was lemon-yellow to look through, and black to look upon. It swarmed with fish, which took the hook, and were supped upon for their sins; and because there was no whisky in the yawl-boat for dilution, it served as a beverage in all its sulphurous nastiness. Then the sun dipped behind the forests at the back, and night followed like the shutting down of a box. One mounted a bull's-eye lantern on the hat-band, which would shine down a rifle's sights, and put out again in the boat, paddling stealthily. It is not always easy to distinguish between a firefly and the gleam from an alligator's eye, and shots are apt to be wasted and the neighbourhood scared. But on that night fortune held, and the lead went home six several times. Then the dead were made more safely dead with the axe, and their slayer laid him down to sleep on the boat's floor with his head beside the centre-board trunk.

So passed my first night away from the sloop. The morning was occupied in the process of skinning, and then once more on towards the east. There were more lakes and more canals all full of their own new wonders; and ever away in the distance on the starboard hand was the noise of the surf as it broke where the logs from the Gulf rivers bristle in the milky sand. In late afternoon I came to a lagoon with a wooded island in it, and amongst the trees of the island, when they grew distinct from one another, I saw a man.

I bore down to him under sail (for there was a spanking breeze coming in from the sea), and when we were within hailing distance, the boat grounded.

'Do you want to land here?' he shouted.

'I don't mind if I do.'

'Then shove off again, and drop down to the tail of the island and luff up sharp where you see a barked tree on the beach. There's no deep water till you come to there.'

I did as he told me, put the boat's nose on a small beach of pebbles, and waited, smoking. I waited half an hour maybe, and then he strolled up very leisurely with his thumbs in the waistbelt of his trousers. I can't say he seemed over pleased to see me. He asked with point what I had come for.

I told him, and then said, 'By the way, you're a Varsity man, aren't you?'

'Yes, Oxford: the House. You are, too, I've a notion?'

'From over the way: Pembroke.'

'Well, if you've nothing better on, leave your boat and come up to my place. Sorry I didn't tumble to you at first, but then you don't look over respectable just now. Are you much down on your luck?'

'Oh, I'm not hunting alligators professionally. I'm here for amusement.'

I concluded he was there because he had got into trouble with the Law of the Land elsewhere, but I did not suggest this, because it is

considered rude to touch upon family matters uninvited. But after a minute he broached the topic himself. 'I'm here for amusement myself,' he said. 'I'm here permanently.'

By this time we had got into a bit of a clearing inside the wall of trees—a patch of sorghum, another of sweet potatoes, another of corn with stalks that stood ten feet high, and a goodly planting of green tobacco plants, with a shambling palmetto shuck at the back.

'Faith,' I said, 'you've queer notions of a pleasure-resort.'

'I'm a man,' he said, 'with an imagination. Consequently I make a most comfortable hermit. Come in and take a hammock. Where's our eight on the river?'

I told him, and we went on hard at boating shop till the sun went out. It was wonderful what a lot of men we knew in common when we began to talk things over, and it turned out that we had rowed against one another at Henley for two events. 'Of course,' he broke out at once; 'you are the Macdonald who swam down from Marsh lock to Henley bridge in your clothes the last night of the races because you said you hadn't been allowed a decent dip all through the training.' And 'By Jove!' I said, 'you are Atcheson of the Leander who steered their Stewards' four from bow, and ran five feet of her through the side of an oak dinghy.' Whereat we both laughed, and knew one another extremely well. After this I asked him if he ever ate.

'Why, yes,' he said, 'I'd forgotten. What'll you have? There's some boiled fish, and sweet spuds and molasses. The fish is on the floor in the far corner there, and the rest is mixed ready in the saucepan. There are no plates. Help yourself.'

'Candles?' I suggested.

'Haven't such a thing; or lamp. Can't you feed in the dark? There will be a moon above the tree-tops directly, if you want light.'

'I say, am I to ladle up this stuff with my fingers?'

Atcheson laughed. 'I'm not going to lend you mine,' he said. 'Why, what a luxurious sybarite you must be. Climb back, Macdonald, down the centuries, and enjoy yourself as Primitive Man. Feast and be filled, and then come to your hammock again and talk intellectually. There's a tin down there somewhere with water in it, or coffee, I forgot which. Drink when you're dry.'

I began to have a strong idea that the man was mad; but I stopped my hunger on his victuals for all that; and then relit my pipe and went on with the talk.

From the other side of the clearing came the noises of the night—the chatter of katydids and the rustle of jarflies, the love-song of tree crickets and toads, the deep reed notes of frogs in their patches of marsh; and through all mingled the heavy diapason of the surf, from across the dunes, and the forest, and the black waters of the lake, mellowed by its passage through the purple night. I am the most practical and unpoetical creature in the world, as a general thing, but the influence of it was too heavy for me. I started on to chat again about the boats, and about women, and yachts,

and books, and the other interests of the outer world; but the things fell flat, and presently the talk died out of us altogether. We lay there, hung in silence, and sensuously drinking in what the night gave up. We must have spent hours without throwing down a word.

Then Atcheson spoke. 'That is my usual concert,' he said. 'One gets to like it.'

I did not answer at once. I could not, although his words came clearly enough to my ears. A sort of mesmeric doze pinned me down.

When I managed to rouse, I felt angry with myself for weakness, and spoke with a sneer. 'You must find it mighty monotonous,' I said.

'A mistake, an utter mistake. It is full of infinite variety: it never repeats itself; and I know, because I have listened to it now for three years, in calm, in cyclone, in every kind of night which God will give. It is His orchestra, but until the taste has grown, one does not know this.'

Another pause. Then, 'Are you going to write about this Walden Pond of yours?' I asked.

'I am no Thoreau with a pen. Besides, I am selfish, and if I could set this down I would not. One man in ten thousand might understand, some wild fellow, who had lived in the air, with the things that grow in the air away from the pestilence of cities, and he would never lift a book; but the others would either yawn or deride, and I take it this is no matter to be profaned. And yet there is nothing new in it all: only the old things changed. I have rambled over the world, and seen and tried most pleasures: the sounds here give it all back to me again, only here it is idealised.'

'I hardly understand.'

'Listen to the Gulf surf rumbling on those beaches.'

'It is like the roar of the Prater, or the Strand, or the Rambla, or Broadway, as it comes to an upper window.'

'You can hear that: I can make out more, because my ear is trained. I can hear the voices and what they say—the tales of love, and hope, and hate; the merry laugh, the curses, the wild and bitter laugh; and in the tree-tops yonder I can see these people who move and live, and follow them as they pass along, with their skirts rustling, and their shoulders jostling one another. The place is full of life to me and full of company, and I can revel in it all without being mixed in the dirt and the pains and the squalor. And it is very beautiful also. What picture did you ever see like that?'

He waved a hand to where the red moon and a patch of purple sky hung framed in a black arch of the pines. In the foreground the lake lay twinkling beyond a great fan of palms. On the flank was spread a thick magnolia tree, full of scented blossom, and splashed with cones of coral pink.

I looked, and hung on my gaze; and once more the silence grew between us.

The spell of the place was closing down again and pinning me. I roused myself with an effort, and swore for relief. 'Atcheson,' I said, 'I believe you are either the devil, or

Circe with a changed sex. Be merciful and speak no more, and let me sleep. If I listen on I shall forget the place from whence I am come, and stay here, and become as one of the swine.'

'I am sorry,' Atcheson said, 'and because I do not want converts or companions I will say no more. Therefore sleep you.'

## II.

The miasma of the lotus was in my veins, and I knew it and feared. I woke sullen and suspicious with the first lift of day, and got down to my boat. Atcheson came after and cried a pleasant *auf wiedersehen*, and I answered with a scowl and threw out the sculls. I was very angry with myself, and still more frightened. I had been in that kind of temptation before, and knew what it was afterwards to wish that I had fallen. Consequently I made up my mind to get back to the yacht without a halt, and so put in a day of savage toil; and because the sun above burned like a kettle of molten brass, and the air baked, the material pains of the body gave me other matters to think about. And when I made out the sloop's riding-light dancing on her forestay, I knew there was another antidote close at hand. The Man with the Sunburnt Legs was a very carnal and practical sort of person.

He received me affably. He fed me first with sumptuousness, referred to the decrease of his own affliction, and then told me that we and the oysterman no longer had the bayou to ourselves.

'The Van Sciaks have come in with their schooner,' he said; 'and they've a girl on board who says she knows you—a Miss Wilcox.'

'Ah,' I said, 'I know her well enough. We used to see a goodish deal of one another once.'

'If you mean that you were spoons on the lady,' said the Man with the Sunburnt Legs, 'I guess you'd better forget that. She's engaged to a Yankee man from Massachusetts now, a person with culture and dollars—heaps of dollars—about ten million of 'em, so I believe. And being *anno aetatis suae* twenty-eight, she knows what is a soft thing, and is not likely to chuck it up. Take off those rags and put on something respectable, and we'll make the nigger scull us across. She said I was to bring you when you turned up.'

'Not now. At present I am going to turn in to sleep. Probably I shall die in the course of the night. It will save me the trouble and pain of kicking myself if I do.'

'Did you,' said the Man with the Sunburnt Legs, 'in the course of your wanderings find a place where they sold corn whisky? Oh, you're snoring already, are you? Surely it's drunk you are, my son, because otherwise you've come back very dotty. What rot to go and live like a hermit all by your lonesome.'

## III.

Miss Wilcox was a young woman with a great notion of having her own way. Had I known her less, I should have tried to avoid speaking on a matter which I preferred to keep silence upon. Being acquainted as we

were, I did not bring out any futile stubbornness.

She wanted to know what there was to be seen in the lagoons and lakes, and I told her, with one reservation; but my tale did not quite hold water, and she twigged that there was something left out, and demanded to hear what it was. Whereupon I shrugged my shoulders helplessly, and told her about Atcheson, chapter, commas, and verse, merely lying in the solitary instance of a personal name.

'You say that he is a Christ Church man?' she demanded, when I had finished.

'Did I say so?'

'You did; and you mentioned also that he rowed against you at Henley for the Stewards' and the Ladies' Plate. That fixes him. If you'd done me the compliment to remember, I was down there on a houseboat that year. And so, of course, his name isn't Foote at all?'

'Perhaps it's got changed,' I admitted weakly. 'Men's names do, you know, when they climb down the scale as he's done.'

'Hum,' she said, and pulled down a chart of the Northern Gulf Coast from its cleat in the cabin roof. 'Now show exactly where this hermit lives.'

'The chart's all wrong. The place in there isn't surveyed.'

'Precisely. But you've been there, and you know the lay of it. Don't be shy. Your powers, my dear Mac, in that direction are notorious. Here's a pencil. Fill it in accurately, and tell me the landmarks from the Gulf side.'

'If you go up there, and see this fellow, and sleep even one night in those swamps, you'll catch fever and die. Also, the mosquitoes and the sandflies will eat most of you before death comes. Don't be a fool. What more do you want to know about the man? Stay here, and I will tell you.'

'My excellent Mac, I have pumped you dry. For the rest I must see him myself. And I shall not die of fever, because I shall get this yacht to take me round to the outside, and go from there, and so not have to spend a night ashore at all. Nor will the insects of the swamps devour me, because I own a wide-brimmed hat, and a large and most excellent veil.'

'Well,' said I, 'if you will do this thing, at all events you shall do it decently. There's a small creek on beyond, up which we will incite the Van Sciaks to take the yacht. I'll bring our sloop. We will go with the pretence of alligator-hunting.'

'You are an excellent person, Mac. You always see your own tastes arn't trampled on.'

'My dear Mary, the alligator-shooting is a piece of deception for which I blush. It is entirely on your behalf that I take up any more of it. You ought to be extremely grateful; not sarcastic. Go now and wheedle the Van Sciaks, and I'll go and get my own boat under weigh.'

In an hour's time the two yachts were standing out board and board over the shallow bar which guards the entrance to Bayou Bon

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Secours. There was a romping breeze from the nor'ard, and we span at eight knots past the low shore, where only the tree-stems show above the water. Then we slipped out through the channel between Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan, and lifted to the swing of the outer sea, running east along the Gulf Coast. Night had fallen before we made the creek, and we tacked in over the bar by blazing moonlight, with centre-boards up, and the breeze eddying light and fitful through the trees. That night we took the rifles and the bull's-eye lanterns, and shot a dozen alligators by way of giving ourselves countenance.

Of course, Miss Wilcoxen did go to see Atcheson. I took her to the island myself, through an intolerable maze of lakes and waterways, and told the Van Sciaks that we hoped to slay alligators by daylight, which is probably the baldest excuse a grown man with a pretty invention ever made. But I will give the girl credit for one thing—she didn't stay talking to the fellow for more than ten minutes. What she said to him I don't know, because my instructions were to stay by the boat and see if it didn't drift away. But when she came back, and we rowed off, she found cause to comment that Atcheson was a curious handful.

'I told you that before,' I said. 'Now you've learnt it for yourself, I trust you're satisfied?'

'I am entirely, Mac. I hope you are too?' 'I don't know about that. But I do know I'm extremely hot.'

'Well then, hurry and get back, and I'll fix you up a mint-julep. We've ice on board, and all the other necessaries, and Mr Van Scia has shown me how to use a swizzle-stick. He said it might come in useful, as I had thoughts of settling in America, don't you know?'

'So I've been given to understand. As you have not had my congratulations before, please accept them now in all fullness. I suppose I'm scratched from the running now?'

'Completely, my dear boy. And it doesn't surprise you in the least, or disappoint you either. We'd have quarrelled like cat and dog. We've no tastes in common. For instance, except for perhaps once, I loathe alligator-hunting.'

And so we went back, and I was rewarded not with one julep only, but several.

The Van Sciaks wanted to go to Mississippi Sound next day, and as the other man and I were bound for Pensacola, in Florida, the yachts separated, and I did not see Miss Wilcoxen again for some time. But I heard of some of her doings, which, to say the least of them, seemed eccentric. Also, which was worse, they were unworldly. Young men with culture and ten million dollars are not to be picked up every day; nor should they be thrown lightly aside.

But when I got back to town, and, to my vast astonishment saw Atcheson there, then a light began to dawn upon me. He was marching down Pall Mall as large as life, and very resplendent. He had on a frock-coat down to his heels, the last gift of the gods

in the way of hat and tie, and a new reaped chin, which stood out refreshingly white against the rest of his countenance. He shook me by the hand and said I was a great man. Then we went into a club and talked for several hours without a stop, and he explained to me how a hermit cannot hermitise unless he has a disease vulgarly known as the 'hump.'

'It's enjoyable enough whilst you have that,' said Atcheson, 'but when the hump goes, the bottom's knocked out of the hermit business altogether. What a filthy, squalid brute I must have been all that time.'

'But you liked it well enough.'

'I believe I did, in my morbid way. But it's over and done with now, thank Heaven! and "I'm going to marry Yum-Yum, Yum-Yum, your anger pray tarry"—Oh, bother, I've forgotten the words. Jove! I shall have a lot to pick up again.'

'That's a fact,' I said. 'Ordinary sanity amongst other things. And so you're going to marry Mary Wilcoxen, after all?'

'It's a sure thing. Of course, her people were mad, because I'm not very well off, don't you know; and the other Johnnie's people are mad, too, at his being cut out. But you're the person they can't get over. It's you they are wild at principally. They will persist in it that you're at the bottom of the whole thing. Isn't it delightfully funny?'

I didn't think it funny at all. I make quite sufficient enemies off my own bat for personal consumption. And, besides, as I have said, if the other fool hadn't got his legs sunburned, I shouldn't have gone off *solas* in the yawl-boat, and meddled with Atcheson at all.

#### OUR UNINVITED GUESTS.

We live in one of the western counties of Ireland, and last winter our house was invaded by unexpected guests. These were two robins! When first they came, they explored every nook and corner in the house, and were seemingly satisfied, and made themselves familiar with everybody, remaining indoors at night, but flying off every morning. It was amusing to see them dart at their reflection in the mirrors; but they soon learned they were attacking an imaginary foe. After some time, we observed them carrying in their beaks withered leaves, moss, and other dry substances; and accident disclosed that nest-building operations were being busily conducted. The place selected was a book-shelf near a window in the drawing-room. The nest when discovered was nearly finished, and much ingenuity had been expended on its construction. The books—a library edition of Dickens—did not occupy the entire space on the shelf; so the birds laid the foundation on the shelf at the back of the books, and filled up the unoccupied space next the wall with the building materials to the height of the books, and then formed the nest over the ends

of the volumes. However, this nest was left unfinished, and the birds went to the Library : they displayed an evident love for literature ! Here they began two nests, both in book-cases in different parts of the room. Neither of these sites pleased the builders, for eventually they resumed work on the first nest in the drawing-room, and soon completed it. If one ventured near the nest during the progress of building, the birds would fly out and, with a shrill chirp, peck the hand or head of the intruder ; but unless they went near the nest, the robins did not otherwise notice the occupants of the room.

Spring was now advancing, and the birds seldom stayed indoors. When the hen began laying, she came in through our bedroom window—which we kept open at night—between five and six every morning, flew down the staircase into the room below, and, having laid her egg, went off till next morning. This continued for four mornings, and then she began hatching on five eggs, on the 14th of April, and the young birds were out of the shells on the 28th. The eggs were all fertile ; so we had five young robins. The mother sat on the youthful brood for about eight days ; she then left the nest, and spent the nights out of doors with her mate, returning to the house between four and five A.M. to feed the young ones. On the 10th of May the young birds abandoned the nest, and did not return even at night, but perched here and there on different articles in the room. We kept them in the house at much inconvenience till the 13th of May ; then opening all windows and doors, we induced them to take wing. One or two wished to stay, but we gave them no encouragement.

From the day the young birds were hatched, they were fed by the old ones. The flies and spiders had a bad time of it, as they formed the principal article of diet. Occasionally, a feast of worms or caterpillars was provided. It is amazing with what precision a robin will dart at the flies on a ceiling, capturing them all. We had no reason to suppose the robins intended leaving their nest when they did, except that the night previous to their flighting, one of the young lay on the verge of the nest, as if crowded out. The birds lay in the nest, three underneath and two atop. The parents guarded the nest jealously, and attacked any one who ventured near it. It is asserted that birds will forsake their nest if it is handled ; but we found this to be untrue.

It is difficult to understand the care and watchfulness exercised by the old birds during the day, when they abandoned their home during the night. Although the eggs were laid on different days, the birds came out of the shells on the same day, even the same hour. The robins always attended us at meals, hopping about the table, and pecking at everything. They were specially fond of butter. They sometimes alighted on my knee and looked about from this vantage-ground quite unconcernedly. While the hen was sitting, her mate kept her supplied with food, though the hen often left the eggs for a considerable time, returning with her plumage wet, as if she had been taking a

dip. On these occasions she did not resume her place on the eggs till she spent some time in preening herself.

Even while feeding the young ones out of doors, the pair were preparing for another family, and, as before, began building nests in different parts of the house. Eventually, the new nests were neglected, and the hen laid an egg in the old nest on the 25th of May. An egg which had been previously laid, and found on the kitchen table, we placed in the nest. On the 29th of May the fourth egg was laid ; and on the 10th of June we observed one of the old birds on the edge of the nest with a caterpillar wriggling in its beak. Looking in, we saw that the second brood for the season was in possession. On the 22d of June the young left the nest, perching about the room as before. The hen did not sit so long on the second as on the first brood, and yet both broods left the nest at the expiration of the same number of days. The courage of the parent birds is remarkable, especially that of the mother ; nothing but death alone could abate her love and passion. We tested her bravery several times, but found her courage dauntless.

We have taken pains to note the particulars we have submitted in this paper ; and if a lover of the feathered tribes has gained any information from our account of the habits of our uninvited but welcome guests, we shall feel amply repaid for any inconvenience we may have encountered to give our robin friends house-room. May we add one other remark ? Although frequently on the west coast of Ireland both in winter and summer, we have never seen a robin near the sea.

#### A MISER'S TREASURE.

THE miser lay on his dying bed,  
And no voice by him made moan ;  
No prayer was said, and no tears were shed—  
He died as he lived, alone ;  
And his trembling fingers, damp and cold,  
Drew the iron band away  
From the guarded casket, stained and old,  
Where his hoarded treasures lay.

But his death-dimmed eyes in the fading light  
Looked not on the rubies rare,  
Nor the deep-sea pearls, nor the diamonds bright  
That an empress well might wear ;  
And the gold that he erstwhile loved so much,  
That he perilled his soul to gain,  
Was brushed aside with a careless touch,  
And a glance of cold disdain.

And when strangers looked on the dead in awe,  
In his close-clasped icy hands  
Not Golconda's flashing gems they saw,  
Nor the gold of Afric's sands ;  
And no jewels fair beyond compare  
'Tween the fingers stiff shone through,  
But a golden tress of a woman's hair  
In a ribbon of faded blue.

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